

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MONTHLY REPORT

## OCTOBER 2007

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Each month I establish, with input from the Directors, the priority issues on which management and the staff focus. This report summarizes the work that was accomplished during the month as well as other items I feel will give the Council a better understanding of what the staff and I are doing to accomplish our performance objectives.

### **I. Improve the efficiency and accountability of management within the organization**

- Best Practices

SAP Consulting services have been contracted to perform a financial management information system assessment. The scope of work will include determining whether our current system setup optimized the current SAP version's functionality and whether or not our configuration can easily upgrade to the next version of the SAP software.

The Accounting and Budget and Grants staffs have completed all budget, appropriation, and funding assessment requirements for fiscal year 2008 and are completing testing of a new consolidated budget development system. The new system will extend the existing OWP development system capability to general fund, indirect cost budgets, and improve our analytical capability during the budget process. It will also support realignment of some of our projects and tasks to reduce the administrative costs of project oversight.

### **II. Provide support to the Regional Council in providing direction and leadership to SCAG**

- On September 19th, I, Hasan Ikhata, Joe Burton and staff met with representatives of the Union Pacific and BNSF railroads to discuss and explore additional mitigation measures regarding locomotive emissions and railroad operations that could contribute to meeting the South Coast District's PM<sub>2.5</sub> emission reduction target. The parties agreed to additional meetings to discuss the issues.
- On September 20th, staff and SCAG's Compass consultant met with Los Angeles City Council President Eric Garcetti to review the Compass Demonstration Project exploring the feasibility, land use and urban design implications of a proposal to "deck" the below-grade portion of the Hollywood Freeway and create a new public park and neighborhood centerpiece. SCAG's local partners on the project are the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce and the Hollywood office of the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles. Council President Garcetti's office has been an active supporter of the project as well.
- On September 25th, I and Dan Griset participated in a panel discussion on water supply, comprehensive planning and sustainability. Attending this roundtable convened by the California Foundation on the Environment and the Economy were members of the Legislature, environmental advocates, industry leaders and various others with public interests. A number of legislators expressed interest in the presentation, reflecting their interest in finding better ways to invest state bond funds and other public monies in regions with growth and infrastructure challenges. We will meet with these legislators to clarify their concerns before we go further to build local support for comprehensive planning and the kind of coordination that better supports sustainable outcomes.
- On September 27th, Jim Gosnell gave a presentation on SCAG's High Speed Regional Transit System to OCTA's Transit Planning and Operations Committee.

- On September 28th-30th, I attended and participated in NARC's 6th Annual Mega Regions Forum in Atlanta. The Forum was co-sponsored by the Regional Plan Association and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, and hosted by the Atlanta Regional Commission. The Major Metro discussed a proposed policy paper for ISTEA reauthorization and progress in implementing a Southwest Alliance.

- Member Relations

Member Relations staff had an active month. They attended the SANDAG Committee on Bi-National Regional Opportunities (COBRO) representing the Bi-State Transportation Technical Advisory Committee and volunteered to serve on the Annual COBRO Event Planning Subcommittee. Planning & Policy and Member Relations staff worked in partnership to give numerous RTP/RCP presentations to Subregions, Chamber and community organizations, City Managers, the City of Indio and the Tribal Alliance of Sovereign Indian Nations (TASIN). They participated in the Imperial County Centennial Celebration with Information Technology staff. Member Relations is also meeting with new members to review the information presented at the New Members Orientation event last month.

### **III. SCAG Operations**

- Personnel. Joe Burton started as SCAG's new Chief Counsel on September 17th. The final interviews for Director of Government and Public Affairs are scheduled for October 11th. Recruitment continues for other staff positions.
- Training and Development/Professional Pathways. CPR Training was offered in September along with wellness screenings for blood pressure, glucose, and cholesterol at the annual open enrollment benefits fair. Training is on-going for internal processes, preventing harassment/discrimination, the Leadership/Management training series. The Wellness theme for October is Stress Management. The staff committee planning the next annual SCAG staff retreat has been meeting regularly to finalize the theme and activities. The retreat is scheduled for November 15th and will be held at the Universal Sheraton in Universal City on the North Hollywood Red Line route. The theme is centered around Connecting, Collaborating and Change.
- Organizational Changes. As I discussed with the Executive Committee at the Retreat in June 2007, there were three shifts in the organization that I was going to make. We have accomplished two of them. We have moved the Business Operations division from Information Services to the CFO's Department. We have also created a new division in Government and Public Affairs. This division will address two general objectives. The first is to pursue special projects that the systems planning process as led to a strategy or program but the institutional arrangements need further refinement and/or development (e.g. the decentralization of the aviation system, High Speed Rail, the Southwest Alliance). The second objective is to enhance and better integrate our monitoring and Intergovernmental Review functions with the communications to our members and partners. The last organizational change has been on hold until we are further along in the current plan process.

### **IV. Implement Adopted Regional Plans**

- Maglev High Speed Rail Update. Planning staff and SCAG legal counsel continue to work with staff from the Cities of Los Angeles, West Covina and Ontario regarding changes to the proposed Joint Powers Authority (JPA) agreement for the Maglev/High-Speed Rail Initial Operating Segment (IOS). There was a meeting held on August 10th with all member jurisdictions and SCAG to further discuss the terms of the JPA agreement. The draft of the JPA language will be discussed at the October 11th Maglev Task Force.

SCAG staff has met three times with Tony Morris, president of American Maglev Technologies (AMT) of Atlanta to discuss AMT's interest in the IOS private sector consortium. SCAG staff traveled to AMT in Atlanta to tour the working Maglev test-track. Staff is still reviewing Mr. Morris' proposal and is evaluating certain assumptions regarding financial returns, engineering specifications, operational certification, system controls and integration, environmental issues and proposed timeline for construction.

There will be a field trip to General Atomics in San Diego for Maglev Task Force members on Friday, October 11th to tour the General Atomics facility and Maglev test track.

## **V. Develop Additional Planning Efforts**

- Air Quality. Mayors Loveridge and Sykes, and I and key staff met on September 14, 2007 with Board and staff representatives from the ARB and SCAQMD in an effort to reach an agreement on additional emission reductions from already proposed control measures or new measures to help meet the SCAQMD's PM2.5 emission reduction target. The result is a revised proposal that meets the emission reduction target developed by the SCAQMD. At the same time, the three agencies acknowledge that significant efforts will be needed to identify specific control measures or strategies/mechanisms to achieve the emission reductions associated with the long-term ("black box") measures to meet the 8-hour ozone standard by 2024. In addition, early identification of specific control strategies will play an important role to help address the federal 24-hour PM2.5 ambient air quality standard and potentially a more stringent proposed federal 8-hour ozone air quality standard. Thus, the three agencies are committed to work together to develop a discussion paper within four months from the date of ARB's adoption of the 2007 State Implementation Plan (scheduled for September 27, 2007). The discussion paper will explore potential strategies for the black box and future ambient air quality standards, including new or transformative strategies, such as state-of-technology zero and near-zero transportation systems, other mechanisms such as fee-based incentives, and availability of public funding assistance programs. The three agencies will also work together to implement the actions agreed upon and educate the public and other stakeholders of these efforts.
- RHNA. In a letter dated September 7, 2007, the State's Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) approved SCAG's final Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA) Plan, adopted by the Regional Council on July 12, 2007. The RHNA Plan will be used by jurisdictions within the SCAG region to update local housing elements, respectively due to HCD by June 30, 2008. HCD noted its commitment to continue to work with SCAG and its local jurisdictions through the housing element update process, and acknowledged SCAG's leadership role in addressing the region's housing and community development needs.
- Regional Transportation Plan Workshops. On September 19, 2007, SCAG held the first Environmental Justice Workshop for the 2008 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) at the main office in downtown Los Angeles, with videoconferencing available at the Inland office. The intent of the Workshop was threefold: 1) present general information on SCAG's EJ Program; 2) review the previous EJ analysis in the 2004 RTP; and 3) obtain input from the public on the EJ analysis for the 2008 RTP. There were approximately 17 participants in attendance representing various stakeholder groups. On September 20th we had a workshop on Goods Movement issues. About 75-100 participants were in attendance. The comments received will be recorded, considered, and written responses prepared in the analysis for the 2008 RTP.
- During the last few weeks SCAG staff attended meetings of the West Coast COG/MPOs, the West Coast Corridor Coalition, CALCOG, the Regional CALTRANS Coordinating Group and the Blueprint Learning Network. It was beneficial

to attend all these meetings to gain insight on what other groups are doing and to get ideas for the draft legislative program on which we are working.

- Blueprint Learning Network. The Blueprint Learning Network (BLN) Fresno Workshop focused on the challenges and opportunities of blueprint planning in the Central Valley, including agriculture, water, public health, high speed rail and economic (goods movement) planning integration. A status update about the California Regional Blueprint Planning Program was also provided. How to involve more elected officials in Regional Blueprint initiatives was also discussed. The Business, Transportation and Housing Secretary's Office announced that a third round of Blueprint Grants was approved and that \$5 million will be made available this fall.

## **VI. Data and Planning Methods**

- Development of the 2007 State of the Region Report Card. At its September 17, 2007 meeting staff briefed the Benchmarks Task Force on the draft findings for the 2007 State of the Region Report. Members of the Task Force then discussed and developed the Report Card for issue areas including income, employment, housing, transportation, environment, education and safety. Staff is currently completing a draft 2007 State of the Region Report for review by the Benchmarks Task Force and SCAG Senior Management during the month of October 2007. Upon completion of the respective reviews, staff plans to brief the Community, Economic and Human Development (CEHD) Policy Committee and Regional Council on the draft findings of the 2007 State of the Region.
- Data/GIS Analyses and Services. The Data and Monitoring Division recently completed a comprehensive and comparative analysis of the socio-demographic changes between the zip code 90022 (East Los Angeles) and the LA County. The analysis was conducted upon request from Los Angeles County Supervisor's Office. The results of this study are expected to further support grant funding opportunities.

The division also completed the organization (into GIS) and standardization of parcel data for all counties (except Orange County) inside the SCAG Region. This data will be the backbone of SCAG's Regional Data and Information Repository (RDIR), a web-based GIS application that will enable efficient data sharing, analysis and visualization. Moreover, it is anticipated that this data will provide critical support to the Compass and Blueprint projects.

Finally, the Data and Monitoring Division acquired, organized and made available to city members the latest American Community Survey (ACS) data that is expected to further support the understanding of the socio-economic changes within the SCAG region.

- GIS Automation and Enhancement. The Data Monitoring Division staff has developed several GIS automation tools to further enhance its efficiency in data sharing and analysis. The latest and most significant one includes the socioeconomic growth distributions for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) areas. It is currently supporting the planning and policy analysis in evaluating development around transit stations. The results of this study will be incorporated into the Compass and Blueprint projects.

In addition, work was completed on the agency-wide upgrade to the GIS software which will have additional functionalities. The new software will be used to produce more products that can be posted on the SCAG website.

- In conjunction with the Municipal Information Systems Association of California (MISAC), SCAG is sponsoring a one-day Municipal Wireless Initiatives Conference. The conference will be held at the Westin Bonaventure in Los Angeles on

Thursday, November 8th from 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. The speakers include Anne Neville, providing an update on the recommendations of the Governor's statewide Broadband Initiatives Task Force, and a representative from Southern California Edison with new information regarding pole attachment rules. The state of wireless technology, wireless applications, and cost of ownership will be covered in the program. Online registration will be available on SCAG's web site on Wednesday, October 10. The event is no cost to SCAG and MISAC members and includes continental breakfast and lunch in the exhibitor area.

## **VII. Legislative and Communication Programs**

- Legislative Update. As indicated in SCAG's End of 2007 Legislative Session Report, SCAG has begun the process of preparing the 2008 SCAG State & Federal Legislative Program. This document, containing the Regional Council's positions on policies and legislative initiatives that need the leadership and support of Congress and the California State Legislature to successfully meet the major transportation, housing, and environmental challenges facing the SCAG region, is scheduled to be adopted by the Regional Council in December 2007.

SCAG-sponsored AJR No. 40, introduced by Assembly Member Kevin De Leon on August 23, 2007, has been assigned to the Assembly Transportation Committee where it will be considered when the Legislature convenes for the 2008 legislative session. SCAG will work during the legislative recess to obtain additional support for AJR 40 from local health and environmental organizations in order to assist swift passage of AJR 40 in early 2008.

SCAG continues to work with Senator Lowenthal on SB 974, the measure requiring the Ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach, and Oakland to collect a user fee to fund congestion management and air quality improvement projects. SB 974 was amended on September 5, 2007, to provide for much greater local control on fee allocation, including a consulting role for SCAG in the process. SB 974 is a two-year bill and resides in the Assembly 3rd Reading file where it will be taken up in 2008. SCAG will continue to monitor and support the measure.

SCAG continues to monitor and recommend language to the legislation designed to implement the housing, transportation and water bonds approved by voters in November, 2006. The Governor signed State Budget trailer bills SB 86 & SB 88 on August 24, 2007. SB 86 contained language that is consistent with regional blueprint and/or regional transportation plans. SB 88 addressed the transportation bond, where SCAG has advocated for an appropriate share from the transportation improvement fund to be allocated for projects in the SCAG region and requested that SCAG be identified among the agencies to develop a corridor plan in the SCAG region.

On a matter related to the bond implementation legislation, Business, Transportation and Housing Secretary Dale Bonner instructed the California Transportation Commission in a letter dated September 19, 2007, to adopt a program of Trade Corridors Improvement Fund by December 31, 2007, that will begin to fund goods movement projects. This development may effect how the Legislature proceeds with the allocation of bond funding and the outcome of bond implementation bills, such as SB 9 & SB 19, that are scheduled to be considered when the Legislature convenes for the 2008 legislative session.

- Staff Completed the Public Participation Plan Amendment No. 1 and have included on the October 4th Regional Council agenda. This Plan addresses comments received from FHWA, EPA, Caltrans and others, and includes a summary of our online survey results on public participation efforts and how they impact the RTP and the RTIP as well as a matrix of the comments and responses received on the Public Participation Plan.

- Staff within the Planning and Policy department as well as the Member Relations section within the Government & Public Affairs department continued the major outreach effort for the Regional Transportation Plan and the Regional Comprehensive Plan and other SCAG initiatives. During the month of September, 32 formal presentations were conducted.
- During the month, SCAG hosted a delegation of college students from Taiwan, a delegation of highway engineers from Yunnan, China, a delegation of members of Parliament from India, a delegation of government officials from Guangzhou Province, China, and a delegation of government officials from Inner Mongolia.